

Desert Rifles

Issue 5

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Bringin' Down the House



Story and photos

By Spc. Justin Carmack
350th MPAD

The 122nd Engineer Brigade began the estimated three-day process of tearing-down the building complex located across from the entrance of Rifles Base on June 2.

The complex, which was constructed for the Ba'ath Party, was demolished as part of a plan to bring the level of safety at Rifles Base to a new high. The subject of demolishing these buildings was once again brought to light after the attack on Rifles Base on May 29.

In the recent attack, terrorists used the buildings as cover and concealment against U.S. Forces housed at Rifles Base.

Spc. Rafael Moya-Epimentel, a member of the 94th Engineering Company and D9-R operator, said, "We're taking the buildings down so that the enemy can not fire from this location into the compound."

The D9-R, a large armored bulldozer, was brought to Rifles Base from Camp Doha, Kuwait, to assist in the demolition project. The machine was used to breach trenches and clear minefields during the Coalition Forces' initial surge toward Baghdad.

"When they needed to get through places... we made the way," said Moya-Epimentel. "It's still getting used for projects like this."

Clockwise from right: An excavator operator from the 122nd Engineering Company pauses during the demolition of the largest building in the complex. Bulldozers flatten the remains of the building so terrorists may not take cover behind the rubble. A Bradley Fighting Vehicle crew provides over watch during the operation. An excavator destroys upper portions of the building. Members of the 94th Eng. Co. assist with the demolition by operating the D9-R.

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Dragon Co. Guards Iraqi Monument

Story and photos
By Sgt. Danny C. Martin Jr.
350th MPAD

HADITHAH, Iraq- Unlike the U.S. military in this region, the people of Iraq have little or no access to alternate power sources such as generators. They depend on constant, reliable power to be available.

To meet the needs of the people, a dam, capable of generating 150 megawatts of power when running at only half its potential was built, beginning between 1979 and 1987, on the Euphrates River. Simply put, this is enough energy to power nearly the entire Al Anbar province without fail. From Al Fallujah to Al Qaim, power from the dam here is available.

Seen as a strategic position, as well as a site which needed security, U.S. Army Rangers secured the dam at the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The security responsibility was then passed to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and then to the 1st Battalion, 124th Infantry Brigade from the Florida National Guard. Now, this superstructure of steel, concrete, six power-producing turbines and millions of gallons of water is the responsibility of Dragon Company, 1st Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment.

According to Capt. Jonathan Klug, commander of Dragon Co., the mission of his troops is to keep the dam secure. "This is much the same as any security mission," he said.

Some troops see their new mission in a different light. For these tankers and cav. troops, they have to improvise, adapt and overcome, according to Klug, since they

have trained extensively at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif., for tracked warfare and have now transitioned to a security force.

"We (Coalition Forces) really need to be here," said Sgt. Chris Bush, with 1st platoon. "It's just too bad we came in so late," he added in regards to the current impoverished state of Iraq and its people.

Considering the things these troops have been through and the constant change, Klug said, "Morale, overall, is good."

Over 80 members of the 3d ACR are responsible for the security of the dam. Observation posts line all sides of the dam, keeping the local fishermen and pleasure boaters at a safe distance, as well as keeping away unauthorized traffic.

Before the war began, the dam had approximately 300 employees. Now, 50 employees keep the dam continually running. Now, however, the dam runs on three turbines, which still generate more than enough power for the region.

For the troops of Dragon Co., the mission here is seen as a relaxation period according to some. Since their arrival in Iraq, these soldiers have not been in the



HQ--- A tent observing the south sits high atop the seven-story dam in Hadithah.

same place for more than five days. Whether it was a short move of 10 kilometers or a 10-hour road march of their tracked vehicles, they have always been on the move.

The constant moving is not only hard on the soldiers, but on their equipment as well.

"Whenever we stop, vehicle maintenance is a priority," said Bush. "The move from Colorado to here is stressful on the vehicles. Right now I'm missing a bunch of track pads and running mostly steel on concrete."

Now that Dragon Co. is securing the dam, they are able to "fix, think and relax," according to Spc. James Rigdon, a 3d ACR communications specialist.

Dragon Co. soldiers are on duty for 48 hours of rotational guard and then have 24 hours of rest and relaxation, two feelings which have been absent from these soldiers since Fort Carson.

"Whatever mission they give us, we'll execute to the best of our ability," commented Klug, putting full faith in the training, leadership and professionalism of the troops of Dragon Co.

HONOR--- To commemorate the completion of the dam, Iraq put a picture of it on the 250 dinar, just to the left of former President Saddam Hussein, which displays its importance to the people of Iraq.



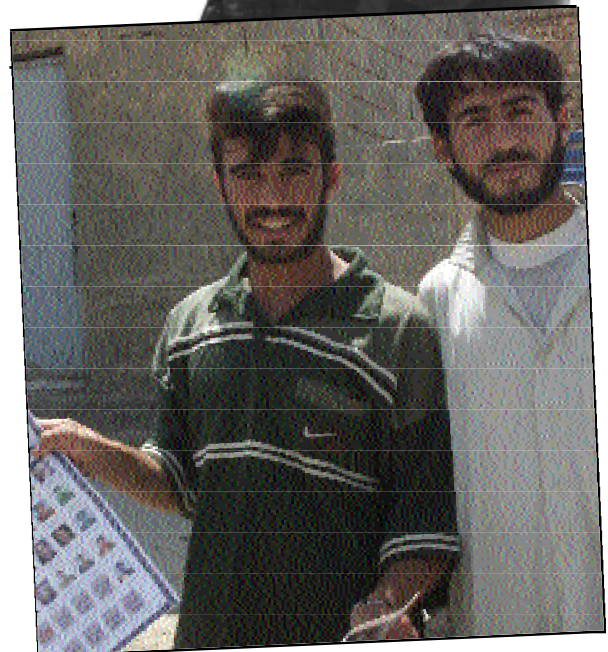


“It went really well... the information got to the people. We’ll see what happens in the next couple weeks.”
---Cpl Creighton Yost



On May 20, members of Tactical Psychological Operations Detachment 1270 handed out informative flyers to the citizens of Al Qa'im as soldiers from the 94th Military Police Company provided overwatch. Photos listed clockwise from top left: Cpl. Creighton Yost of Tactical PSYOP Detachment 1270 prepares to exit his HUMVEE as the operation begins. (Top Right) Sgt. Mark Hatsell and Cpl. Creighton Yost speak with locals on the streets of Al'Qaim. (Center Right) Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Lowery gives his soldiers encouragement during the operation. (Bottom Right) Two citizens of Al'Qaim pose with the flyers they received. (Center Left) A soldier from the 94th MP Battalion scans her sector while providing overwatch for the PSYOP Detachment.

*Photos by Spc. Justin A. Carmack
 350th MPAD*



From Behind the .50 cal

Story by Spc. Joe Niesen
Photos by Spc. Justin Carmack

AR RAMADI, Iraq—As a journalist with the United States Army, I have been told that it is my job to 'break contact' if ever I was to encounter the enemy. However, when pulling guard duty, that bit of public affairs doctrine tends to get thrown out the window.

Like many soldiers in traditionally non-combat positions, I tend to complain about a lot of the extra duties I am often assigned. From KP to crap-burning, I have completed my assignments with a pinch of spite. Yet, when I was actually faced with the gravity of the situation on guard duty May 30, I realized the pettiness of my former complaints.

It was a very dusty night. Sand and debris danced about limiting visibility to a scant few feet. I was irate. It wasn't even my night for guard; I had just pulled it the night before. According to my superiors, my section of four lower enlisted personnel would have to provide two soldiers for the 2000 to 2200 shift. My friend and colleague Spc. Justin Carmack and I grabbed our gear and reported the standard 15 minutes prior to shift.

Not really giving it much thought or concern, I opted to pull my watch from the top of the M88 recovery vehicle. I vaguely knew how to work the .50 cal from my first enlistment as a mechanic, so I spent the first few minutes reacquainting myself with the rusted piece of weaponry.

We were joking about what a waste of talent it was to put us at the gate in harms way when the first rocket propelled grenade went off.

I remember the white flash that completely blinded me in my night vision goggles. Before I could think about what to do, I found my self charging the .50 cal and dropping down into the M88.

Then we heard the second blast. I immediately began scanning my field

of fire as the sergeant of the guard (SOG) took accountability and radioed command for support.

It was creepy. The green/black haze of my NVGs barely provided me with a view of the street in front of me.

Sweat poured in rivulets from my face and I began frantically gnawing on a piece of chewing gum. Carmack was on the ground, and I yelled to



SCAR--- The first RPG struck one of the walls inside the compound near tower two.

make sure he was all right. None of us had a clear idea of what was going on.

All was quiet and my senses were on hyper-active mode as I stared into the darkness. I could tell by the flicker in my green world that the batteries in my NVGs were about to fade out. Cursing my luck, I yelled for someone to get me a new battery. None heard or answered.

The quick reaction forces were busy setting up their own sectors of fire and the (SOG) was busy with the radio. I prayed earnestly for some divine luck to keep my goggles working through my shift, the length of which I was now beginning to question.

A car approached the gate. It was one of the orange and white, beat-up cabs the locals use. The SOG began shouting at the driver to stop and turn off his lights. I prayed that it was just a scared local and that the situation would end peaceably.

His headlights were blinding in the NVGs and the SOG was yelling at him to turn off the lights and stop his vehicle, neither of which he was doing.

Suddenly I heard a shot. Now, many will sit comfortably on the patio outside their bungalow and tell you what caliber of weapon can be heard in the distance. Up close, they all sound the same.

A shot rang out and I was quick to answer with a barrage of my own.

The 'ting' of the brass and the streams of light consumed my senses. There was no second-guessing, no questioning of my actions, I just acted on instinct. I amazed myself and the SOG who quickly ordered me to cease fire while the driver of the car backed away.

Later, I would find out that he was looking for one of the soldiers on the compound and was apparently making a delivery of some sort. It

sobered my tales of firing and almost sawing his car in half with the .50 cal. I am not ashamed of my actions or worried that I made the wrong decision. My actions were an attempt to protect myself and my fellow soldiers. I am, however, saddened by the reality of our current situation where friend and foe often wear the same clothes.

When my guard shift finally came to a close an hour later, I was disappointed by the fact that one soldier failed to report on time. I didn't catch the name as I stepped down from the M88, but his actions were offensive. I would have pursued the matter, but I needed a few moments.

Carmack decided to remain until relief showed up, and I told him that I would return after I had time to collect myself.

I returned to guard and still complained about the scores of deficiencies I found, but I still am confident that my training as a soldier has not been wiped out completely by my work as a journalist.

Sports Wrap-Up

Here's a look at the latest standings in the world of major sports.

Major League Baseball

National League

East

Atlanta
Montreal (-6 ½)
Phil. (-8)
New York (-12)
Florida (-13)

Central

Chicago
Houston (even)
St. Louis (-1)
Cincinnati (-2 ½)
Pittsburgh (-7)
Milwaukee (-8 ½)

West

San Francisco
Los Angeles (-4)
Colorado (-7)
Arizona (-8 ½)
San Diego (-20)

American League

East

Boston
New York (-½)
Toronto (-2 ½)
Baltimore (-5)
Tampa Bay (-11)

Central

Minnesota
Kansas City (3 ½)
Chicago (-7 ½)
Cleveland (-9)
Detroit (-15 ½)

West

Seattle
Oakland (6)
Anaheim (-9 ½)
Texas (-14)

Stanley Cup Finals

Anaheim Mighty Ducks vs. New Jersey Devils

New Jersey leads series 3-2

Game 1- New Jersey 3, Anaheim 0
Game 2- New Jersey 3, Anaheim 0
Game 3- Anaheim 3, New Jersey 2 (OT)
Game 4- Anaheim 1, New Jersey 0 (OT)
Game 5- New Jersey 6, Anaheim 3
Game 6- Saturday, June 7, 8:00 p.m. EDT
*Game 7- Monday, June 9, 8:00 p.m. EDT
*- if necessary

NBA Finals

New Jersey vs. San Antonio

San Antonio leads series 1-0

Game 1- San Antonio 101, New Jersey 89
Game 2- Friday, June 6, 8:30 p.m. EDT
Game 3- Sunday, June 8, 8:30 p.m. EDT
Game 4- Wednesday, June 11, 8:30 p.m. EDT
*Game 5- Friday, June 13, 8:30 p.m. EDT
*Game 6- Sunday, June 15, 8:30 p.m. EDT
*Game 7- Wednesday, June 18- 8:30 p.m. EDT
*- if necessary

NASCAR Winston Cup Standings

1.	Matt Kenseth	1945 pts.	1 Win
2.	Dale Earnhardt Jr.	1774 pts.	3 Wins
3.	Jeff Gordon	1758 pts.	1 Win
4.	Bobby Labonte	1716 pts.	1 Win
5.	Kurt Busch	1698 pts.	2 Wins
6.	Michael Waltrip	1631 pts.	1 Win
7.	Jimmie Johnson	1606 pts.	2 Wins
8.	Rusty Wallace	1556 pts.	0 Wins
9.	Kevin Harvick	1539 pts.	0 Wins
10.	Robby Gordon	1473 pts.	1 Win



The Back Page...

Bulls Sold in Montana Linked to Mad Cow---

In the first sign of a U.S. link to Canada's investigation of its mad cow scare, officials said five bulls from the Canadian herd that had a cow with the disease ended up in Montana.

State authorities said Wednesday that the five bulls had since been slaughtered, but it was not known what happened to the carcasses.

None of the animals ever showed signs of the disease, said Karen Cooper, spokeswoman for the Montana Department of Livestock. Ron DeHaven, a spokesman for the U.S. Agriculture Department's animal inspection service, also played down fears, noting negative tests so far on other animals linked to the infected cow.

Stewart declares innocence on web--- Martha Stewart professed her innocence to the American public in

a newspaper advertisement and on a Web site on Thursday, a day after she was charged with securities fraud and lying to authorities.

With flourishes once reserved for cake decoration, Stewart's signature graced an open letter dedicated to "friends and loyal supporters" published as a full-page ad in USA Today and on a new Web site, www.marthataalks.com.

"I want you to know that I am innocent -- and that I will fight to clear my name," Stewart wrote in the letter, throwing out an open challenge to U.S. prosecutors in what is expected to be one of the biggest media spectacles since the trial of O.J. Simpson on murder charges.

Adam Sandler weighed as Tom Cruise co-star---

Adam Sandler, who stepped out of his usual comedic mold to star in Paul Thomas Anderson's "Punch-Drunk Love" last year, appears to be eyeing another left turn in his choice of characters.

On Wednesday night, Sandler was scheduled to meet with filmmaker Michael Mann to discuss the possibility of starring opposite Tom Cruise in the director's "Collateral" for DreamWorks.

If he joins the project, Sandler would play Max, the meek cab driver who picks up a passenger (Cruise) who takes him hostage.

Man jailed for airport explosion---

A Japanese journalist was jailed Sunday for 18 months for blowing up a Jordanian airport security guard as he tried to show that a souvenir cluster bomblet from the Iraq war was harmless.

The state security court sen-

tenced Hiroke Gomi, 36, a photographer for Japan's Mainichi daily, to a reduced 18 months sentence after dropping charges of possession of explosives -- an offence punishable by up to 15 years.

Gomi was convicted on a lesser count of causing unintentional death and inflicting bodily harm in the blast at Amman's international airport on May 1 that killed Sergeant Ali Sarhan and wounded four others.

Chief judge Colonel Fawaz al-Baqour said Gomi had behaved recklessly in seeking to prove to the security guards that the bomblet was safe before handing it over.

WHO says SARS 'over its peak'---

The SARS outbreak is "over its peak" around the world, including in the hardest-hit country China, a World Health Organization official said Thursday.

A renewed outbreak in Toronto shows, however, that the world must still remain vigilant against the illness, said Henk Bekedam, the WHO representative in China.

"It's fair to say that the SARS epidemic is over its peak. We can see it globally and we can also see it in China," Bekedam told a news conference. "I think that's very good news."

He said the outbreak in Canada's largest city showed that another epidemic could be sparked with "just one missed diagnosis."

"I think the challenge now is to eliminate (SARS) as a public health threat," he said at a news conference.

Teen in coach attack faces boot camp--- A judge recommended a sentence of six

months in a boot camp for the teenager who rushed the field with his father and attacked a Kansas City base coach during a game between the Royals and White Sox last September.

Markham Juvenile Court Judge Michael Stuttley considered a parole violation by the 16-year-old boy and a juvenile delinquency petition before recommending the sentence Wednesday, said Tom Stanton, a spokesman for the Cook County state's attorney's office.

The Illinois Department of Corrections Juvenile Division will decide whether to accept the recommendation. Otherwise, officials could keep him at a juvenile detention facility until his scheduled return for a court review June 2, 2004, Stanton said.

The boy and his father, 35-year-old William Ligue Jr., ran from the seats and started pummeling Tom Gamboa, then the Royals' first-base coach, during a game Sept. 19. Last month Ligue pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated battery and is scheduled to be sentenced June 18.

Question of the Week:

How many packages of hot dogs are sold in Iraq annually?

Submit answers to: RCSM Caldwell in writing with name, rank and section.



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